

IN SALUTE OF THE 369TH VETERANS' ASSOCIATION HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS—A CONGRESSIONAL RECOGNITION IN CELEBRATION OF VETERANS DAY 11-11-11

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, as a veteran of the Korean War, known today as the "Forgotten War", I am honored with great American pride and democracy to salute all my fellow comrades, buddies and all of the officers and members of The 369th Veterans' Association on this very special day as we celebrate Veterans Day 11-11-11.

First organized in 1916 as the 15th New York National Guard Infantry Regiment and manned by black enlisted soldiers with both black and white officers, the U.S. Army's 369th Infantry Regiment, popularly known as the "Harlem Hellfighters," was the best-known African American unit of World War I. Federalized in 1917, it prepared for service in Europe and arrived in Brest in December. The next month, the regiment became part of the 93rd Division (Provisional) and continued its training, now under French instructors. In March, the regiment finally received its Federal designation and was reorganized and reequipped according to the French model. That summer, the 369th was integrated into the French 161st Division and began combat operations.

Dubbing themselves "Men of Bronze," the soldiers of the 369th were lucky in many ways compared to other African Americans in 1918 France. They enjoyed a continuity of leadership, commanded throughout the war by one of their original organizers and proponents, Colonel William Hayward. Unlike many white officers serving in the black regiments, Colonel Hayward respected his troops, dedicated himself to their well-being, and leveraged his political connections to secure support from New Yorkers.

Spending over six months in combat, perhaps the longest of any American unit in the war, the 369th suffered approximately fifteen hundred casualties but received only nine hundred replacements. Unit histories claimed they were the first unit to cross the Rhine; they performed well at Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Wood, earning the epithet "Hell Fighters" from their enemies. Whereas African American valor usually went unrecognized, well over one hundred members of the regiment received American and/or French medals, including the first two Americans—Corporal Henry Johnson and Private Needham Roberts—to be awarded the coveted French Croix de Guerre.

The most celebrated man in the 369th was Pvt. Henry Lincoln Johnson, a former Albany, New York, rail station porter, who earned the nickname "Black Death" for his actions in combat in France. In May 1918, Johnson and Pvt. Needham Roberts fought off a 24-man German patrol, though both were severely wounded. After, they expended their ammunition, Roberts used his rifle as a club and Johnson battled with a bolo knife. Johnson was the first American to receive the Croix de Guerre awarded by the French government.

By the end of the war, 171 members of the 369th were awarded the Legion of Honor. During the war the 369th's regimental band (under the direction of James Reese Europe) became famous throughout Europe. It introduced the until-then unknown music called jazz to British, French and other audiences, and started an international demand for it.

At the end of the war, the 369th returned to New York City, and in February 1919, paraded through the city. Thousands lined the streets to see them: the parade began on Fifth Avenue at 61st Street, proceeded uptown past ranks of white bystanders, turned west on 110th Street, and then swung on to Lenox Avenue, and marched into Harlem, where black New Yorkers packed the sidewalks to see them. The parade became a marker of African American service to the nation, a frequent point of reference for those campaigning for civil rights. In the 1920s and 1930s, the 369th was a regular presence on Harlem's streets, each year marching through the neighborhood from their Armory to catch a train to their annual summer camp, and then back through the neighborhood on their return two weeks later.

In World War II, the formation was organized as the 369th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment, and served in Hawaii and along the West Coast. The Harlem Hellfighters have served in every major conflict since its inception, including Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, and the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan. The unit survives today under the command of Colonel Reginald Sanders as the 369th Sustainment Brigade Battalion of the New York Army National Guard.

As a veteran myself in a so-called "Forgotten War" in American history, I know what it is like to come home and feel unrecognized. On the eve of 11-11-11, the United States Senate passed legislation, which the United States House of Representatives voted unanimously 422-0 to honor the Montford Point Marines with the nation's highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal. These truly great American men fought in some of the bloodiest battles of World War II—the first Black Marines in the Navy. After 70 years, they have finally received the honor they deserve for a legacy we must not forget to pass on to our future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join my colleagues and a very grateful nation in very special congressional salute to my dear friend General Nathaniel James, Retired, National President and all of the officers and members of The 369th Veterans' Association, Inc. as we celebrate our Veterans Day 11-11-11.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 838, I was unable to make the vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

HONORING LIEUTENANT COLONEL RHYS W. HUNT, 2ND LIEUTENANT ANDREW S. HEDIN, AND CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT JASON R. RED UPON RECEIPT OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS WITH VALOR

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge and honor Lieutenant Colonel Rhys W. Hunt, 2nd Lieutenant Andrew S. Hedin, and Chief Master Sergeant Jason R. Red upon their award of the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor.

The Distinguished Flying Cross is America's oldest military aviation award. In 1926, the 69th Congress established the Distinguished Flying Cross to honor any person serving in the Armed Forces who distinguishes him or herself "by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight."

On August 9, 2009, Lieutenant Colonel Rhys W. Hunt, 2nd Lieutenant Andrew S. Hedin, and Chief Master Sergeant Jason R. Red participated in a heroic mission near Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan. Colonel Hunt flew the lead aircraft, PEDRO 15, in an effort to save five critically wounded American soldiers from an ongoing firefight. A Navy SEAL Team, call sign JAGUAR 09, was taking heavy fire by a larger force of Taliban fighters. The team, including their five wounded, was holed-up in a walled compound and needed immediate evacuation.

Despite the potential of enemy fire, Lieutenant Hedin supervised the loading of four of the wounded before the aircraft cabin ran out of space. Colonel Hunt directed his wingman to begin an approach to load the final patient, but as PEDRO 15 began its climb out of the zone, it came under fire so intense that both Lieutenant Hedin and Colonel Hunt felt the concussion from the blast. Lieutenant Hedin engaged an enemy squad, temporarily suppressing the threat. Chief Red took tactical lead of the aircraft, calling a break in the opposite direction. Putting himself in grave danger, Chief Red then directed the gunnery pattern by positioning himself almost completely out of the aircraft in order to maintain visual contact with the enemy. This allowed Colonel Hunt and Lieutenant Hedin to protect their vulnerable wingman by attacking the enemy squad from multiple directions. The crew's immense bravery and superb airmanship saved the lives of 16 people and two aircraft.

It was my honor and privilege to recognize Lieutenant Colonel Rhys W. Hunt, 2nd Lieutenant Andrew S. Hedin, and Chief Master Sergeant Jason R. Red at a ceremony while I was home in my district. The outstanding heroism displayed by these men deserves great recognition by the entire United States, the nation they have so selflessly served. They have the respect and gratitude of all Americans.